

VI. CONCLUSION

Throughout this assessment, there are many examples of projects and strategies that further natural resource management efforts of the five municipalities, agencies, and organizations working in the Parker River/Essex Bay ACEC. This assessment documents some of these approaches and encourages others to learn from their success. It is important for communities to continue thinking beyond their own political boundaries by working with other municipalities to manage resources on a regional level. This can be accomplished by doing such things as protecting open space parcels connected to adjacent protected areas in neighboring towns and working with other ACEC communities to apply for regional natural resource grants. The ACEC is a designated resource area that can serve as a unifying link to help create this needed regional approach.

Local and regional groups need to continue adopting regulatory and nonregulatory measures that help guide responsible management decisions. However, fundamental challenges to adopting and implementing new management techniques within local governments include a lack of staff, financial resources, and public support and understanding of the issues. Through interviews, local officials communicated that permit review takes the majority of their time and minimizes their ability to initiate more proactive strategies or improve communication and coordination both within their own local boards and with neighboring communities. These challenges are even more of a concern in towns lacking full-time staff positions. As local officials often do not have the time, staff, or funding needed to address their environmental concerns, the role of regional agencies and organizations and their technical assistance and financial support of new initiatives are key to ensuring effective management of natural resources in the ACEC.

In this assessment, it is also evident that working with the public constituency may afford many benefits and improve the chance that management strategies will be implemented at the local level. Seeing as it is the people for whom the lands are preserved and resources are managed, local governments, state agencies, and conservation organizations should continue fostering a participatory, welcoming, and open relationship with the public they serve. Thus, public education is a fundamental component in the mission of natural resource stewardship. Information disseminated through pamphlets, brochures, letters, newspaper articles, and television are effective ways to educate the public on various topics and provide contacts for further information. Establishing a mechanism for communication with user groups and stakeholders will go far in encouraging their involvement and advocacy for resource protection.

Interviews with local officials and volunteer staff proved to be an invaluable way of obtaining the information needed for this report. Their insight into local and regional approaches, gaps in resource protection, and successful management strategies comprises the majority of the Issues and Case Studies sections. Based on their information and the review of existing bylaws and regulations, CZM North Shore staff were able to offer the strategies highlighted in the final chapter. Ultimately it is up to ACEC municipalities and regional agencies and organizations to decide which actions are the most appropriate based on constraints of staff and funding, realizing that partnerships go a long way in overcoming these constraints. This report provides the ideas, information, and contacts needed to implement additional strategies that have proven successful both at the regional and local level and will ultimately help create a more consistent approach to managing and protecting ACEC resources.



photo by Bruce Carlisle